

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
Monday, August 21, 2023

CONTACT: Kim Schofinski
(615) 571-3165

**JUSTIN P. WILSON NAMED ROBERT SPARKS WALKER LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL WORK**

Part of Governor's Environmental Stewardship Awards

Justin P. Wilson is one of Tennessee's most important conservationists over the last five decades based on his work and contributions in the public sector, private business, and non-profit partnerships. His knowledge of the law, public policy, people, and possibilities has made a clear and lasting difference for Tennessee.

Wilson served as commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) in 1996-1997 and as deputy to the governor for policy under Gov. Don Sundquist 1997-2003. He served six consecutive terms as Tennessee's comptroller from 2009-2021 and continues today as comptroller emeritus.

Wilson was a member of the Financial Advisory Board of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and served as chairman of the Nashville Electric Board, the Davidson County Metropolitan Health Board, and the Community Health Agency of Nashville and Davidson County. He has served in leadership positions for numerous Nashville businesses as well as civic and charitable organizations.

In 1986, Wilson was one of seven founding members of the Nashville Tree Foundation and served as its first treasurer. This vanguard to educate the public and recreate Nashville's urban forests was the predecessor for at least seven other Nashville community tree-planting non-profits.

As TDEC commissioner, he established a policy office to emphasize thoughtful planning on the state's needs and advance the cause of transparency for public information. His support for establishing an early web presence for TDEC created a foundation for greater transparency with rules, permits, enforcement actions and environmental justice data.

Wilson helped establish the 300-mile Cumberland Trail, sharing the original vision of Mack Pritchard, Sam Powell, Bob Brown, and others. He invested his whole being in securing funding for it as TDEC commissioner and as the governor's policy lead. It became Tennessee's 53rd state park in 1998 and the state's only linear park. The park is named after Wilson in honor of his work and was designated permanent by law. The park continues to expand and models success for Gov. Bill Lee's investments in new state parks, in terms of access, wilderness preservation, and enjoyment.

Wilson initiated a regional air quality collaboration meeting in 2001 with the governors of North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. The event led to a regional agreement on air quality that helped

avoid needless signals of conflict and policy uncertainty to the public and investors. Although these first gubernatorial collaborations focused on air quality in the Smoky Mountains, they fostered regional interest and collaboration for future low-carbon and renewable energy expansions. He initiated efforts to clean up one of the largest and severely contaminated Resource Conservation and Recovery Act sites in Tennessee – the 7,700-acre Volunteer Army Ammunition Plant in Chattanooga that became Enterprise South. This bipartisan effort led to roughly half of the property's use for economic and industrial expansion and the other half for buffers, parks, and public uses. Today, Enterprise South is home to Volkswagen's LEED Platinum manufacturing plant for electric vehicles and Tennessee's first utility-scale solar farm.

Over the last 30 years, Wilson has significantly influenced the lives of hundreds of sustainability leaders in Tennessee, fostered and guided the careers of at least three TDEC commissioners, and created a new norm for conservative ideology in Tennessee that includes integrity, fairness, decency, conflict management, collaboration, and honor to our state. He changed lives at an individual and large-scale level. No doubt, he left Tennessee's political and natural landscape much better than he found it.

###